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# The Colored American

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## THE TRUE REFORMERS.

### LEAD THE VAN IN THE NEGRO BUSINESS WORLD.

Marvelous Rise of a Useful Order—  
Grand Master W. L. Taylor a Worthy  
Heir to Mantle of Founder Browne—  
A Magnificent Object Lesson in In-  
dustry, Thrift and Economy.

When a noted financier in Wall street told a British banker that if every Negro business concern in this country were bundled together and dropped into the ocean, there would scarcely be a ripple upon the surface of the commercial sea to mark the event. This was twenty-odd years ago. He could not from his narrow point of view foresee the leavening effect that the schools, colleges and churches would have upon the race just out of bondage. He could not measure the imitative tendency of the discerning Negro, nor did he imagine how far we would realize the necessity for copying the intelligence, enterprise and thrift of our Caucasian contemporaries and how well we could resist the temptation to adopt their vices. He had never heard of William W. Browne, a colored man whose rare organizing genius found concrete expression in 1881 in the formation of a society that should not only "take care of the sick and bury the dead"—as others had been doing for years—but which would enhance the race's opportunities along material lines. This was the

GRAND UNITED ORDER OF TRUE REFORMERS.

And its birthplace was Richmond, Va., where its national headquarters are still located, and from which central trunk the branches and blossoms spread out to every section of the United States.

At the death of Rev. W. W. Browne, in 1897, the order had firmly entrenched itself in the confidence of the people, and its membership was more than 40,000—an organized army of men and women, resolute and enthusiastic in building up the race by the sensible and practical plan of saving money, investing it judiciously, buying real estate and conducting enterprises that will bring rich financial returns to both the race and to the individual.

When Providence ordains the removal of a valuable man from the scene of his activity He never fails to produce an equally strong force to take up the work where the predecessor left off. It frequently happens that a man of certain masterful characteristics is best fitted for the task of laying broad and deep foundations, which when thoroughly settled completes his earthly mission. Another follows him who has within him a peculiar magnetic force and physical energy that combines in one body the rigid pioneer organizer, and the winning personality of the promoter. There can be no rivalry in history for such men, because



PROF. JOHN A. LANKFORD M. D.,  
Superintendent of Industries, at Shaw University, Raleigh, N. C.

the labors of the advocate who enlarges and perfects the plans follows in a natural way the germinal idea originating with the founder. Each is equally essential to the permanency of the organization's principles and prosperity.

REV. W. L. TAYLOR ELECTED W. G. M.

The Order of True Reformers, in its hour of bereavement was unusually fortunate in having in its ranks a man of demonstrated capacity for worth—one who could speak eloquently and convincingly, who could organize compactly and who could execute wisely and promptly. This was Rev. William L. Taylor, known far and wide as one of the most prominent and capable men of the great Southland, and a powerful divine in the Baptist denomination. He began with the True Reformers in 1886, leaving his duties as teacher and preacher at Beaver Dam, Va., to accept a deputyship in the Grand Fountain, a position in which his influence could be more generally felt by reason of a widened sphere for usefulness. For ten years he traveled, lecturing and organizing lodges, covering fully fifteen States, serving with credit to himself and multiplying the resources of the Order. In 1891 he was made vice-president, and carried

upon his shoulders much of the responsibility that attached to the executive head. So signal was his success in every venture that when an heir for the mantle of the deceased founder must be selected the united voice of the body was for W. L. Taylor. He assumed the duties of Acting Worthy Grand Master at once, and in September, 1898, he was elected permanent W. G. M. for the four years' term. For many years he was one of Rev. Mr. Browne's most intimate friends, and thus became thoroughly imbued with the aims and purposes of the Order the great financier had given his life to create and sustain.

CAREER OF REV. W. L. TAYLOR.

Worthy Grand Master Taylor is a native of Caroline county, Virginia. He is still a comparatively young man, having been born in 1854. Educational advantages for the colored race in those days were very meager, yet he was ambitious to find a way to better things for himself, and so he resolved to make a way if he could not find one. He obtained what education he could by attending the short terms of the schools in his county—all the spare moments he had were spent in reading and study.

## "THE MAN WHO WINS."

### PROF. LANKFORD AN EX- EMPLAR OF THE AGE.

An Expert in Architectural Drawing,  
Steam Fitting, and Electrical Engi-  
neering—Superintendent of Industries  
at Shaw University—His Instruction  
Revolutionizing Methods of Labor.

"The man who wins is the man who works—  
The man who toils while the next man shirks;  
The man who stands in his deep distress  
With his head held high in the daily press—  
Yes, he is the man who wins!"

So runs an old song. It teaches a lesson, however, that should appeal to every young man who would make his way through the stern processes that hedge about the pathway to the heights. If the boy of the favored race must earn success by bringing to bear the full force of native and acquired talent, how much more necessary it is for the Negro boy, handicapped, as he is, by racial disadvantages, to exercise his gifts to reach even a modicum of the fame that superior ability entitles him to claim! The young man, black or white, who wins is he who early in life takes counsel with his better self, and learns that the world admits to its inner court and rewards only those who can "do things."

A young Afro-American who has risen by virtue of a quick grasp of this philosophy is John Anderson Lankford. From an humble beginning he has risen to an exalted position through the intuitive and then the skilled intelligence of a spirit that marked a man the natural leader of men. The son of poor but highly respected parents, he could not depend upon a great family name for advancement, yet he did not pine or whine at the freaks of fortune. He solved his problem by going to work. He made a place for himself, and is now, at the age of twenty-eight, Superintendent of Industries at Shaw University, Raleigh, N. C., and architect for the great True Reformers, and carries gracefully the degree of master of sciences—and it is not a courtesy degree, but an insignia of worth wrung from the soil of persistent application and earnest endeavor.

Mr. Lankford was born at Potosi, Mo., in 1874. He mastered the rudiments of an education in the public schools of his birthplace, but reading and studying soon brought an expansion of intellect and ambition that caused him to outgrow his meager environment. He left home to seek the "golden fleece" in the wide, wide world. He had no monied friends, but he had himself and health as capital, and he determined that dividends

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